ECOLOGY

Ecology in NLP is the study of the impact of any change that occurs on the system at large. Before implementing any change, it is critical that the change itself be ecological. It is often useful to consider consequences for self, family, community, society, and planet.

We assume that any system is working perfectly and that there are usually "good reasons" why things are the way they are. Making a change can end up being unsuccessful if we don't take time to step back and evaluate the impact of the change on the other elements of that system. So, in NLP we stress ecological checks before making any change.

An ecological check means stepping back from the proposed change to think about it in a disassociated way. We evaluate the future as though the change were made to see if there are any negative, harmful, or unnecessary results caused by its implementation.

For example: Gene wants to exercise more (seemingly harmless goal). He decides that he wants to go to the Gym 3 nights a week after work. When checking the ecology of that outcome we might find out that it will affect Gene's family in a negative way because they will get to spend less time with Gene….etc.

Another use for the ecology check is to check for congruency within the person. Are all parts on board with the desired outcome? Are there any objections? Any potential sabotage?

General questions:
- "There must be a really good reason why you don't have this yet…"
- "What have you gained by not getting what you want yet?"

Ongoing Ecology Checks: Watch and listen for these in an ongoing manner.
•   Incongruence
•   Forecast possible difficulties
•   Deletions
•   Presuppositions

Specific Ecology Checks: Asks these questions in response to what a person says they want.
•   "Are you aware of any problems or difficulties that might happen if you had that outcome right now?"
•   "Does any part of you have any objection to having this outcome?"
•   "What stopped you from having the change in the past?"
•   "What would you have lost, or what difficulties would you have encountered if you had made this change before?"
•   "Oh, how wonderful that will be! Just totally handled…"
•   "I'm sure there are problems. Let's stop until you have identified and carefully considered every single one of them."
•   "As you move into the future with this outcome, watch yourself in different contexts having the outcome, and notice what you see, hear, and feel about what you have gained by getting this new behavioral choice…and what you have lost."
•   "Good, and now step in and fully become your future self with your outcome, noticing what you see, hear, feel…"
•   "Step into the shoes of a person who is significant in your life as they respond to you with this change."
•   "If someone else you know got this outcome, how could it get in their way or cause them trouble?"
•   "What other person will be the most affected by you making this change? Where do you interact with that person? Imagine you have this outcome and role-play with them? What is it like to be with them at work, home, church, etc.?"
•   "Now going on into the future, look back on your life having already used the new behavior. Notice how the new choice is working. Notice other changes that were required to accommodate the outcome, other changes that have resulted."

Ecology Check (Short form)

Doing an ecology check is checking the consequences of your future actions and plans.

In order to do a full ecology check:

- Think as if you are in the future (future pace)
- What are the wider consequences of my action?
- What will I lose if I make this change?
- What extra will I have to do?
- Is it worth it?
- What will I gain if I make this change?
- What is the price of making this change and am I willing to   pay it?
- What are the good aspects of the present state?
- How can I keep those good aspects while making the change that I want?
- How will my change affect others?
- Does it go against any of their values?
- Does this matter?
- How will they react?

We always recommend that ecology checks are completed with any work with another person or in change work with yourself.